

# Marshall woodworker hobbyist featured in national magazine

by Debra Valine

Being published in a national craftsman's magazine was not what Scott Phillips expected when he first started building Space Shuttle models out of wood more than 15 years ago.

"Woodshop News," a magazine for and about people who work with wood, is featuring Phillips in its December issue. Phillips is a logistics engineer for Lockheed Martin at the Marshall Center, where he has been a member of the External Tank team for 23 years.

Both woodworking and the Space Shuttle are in his blood. "I love working with wood — particularly exotic hard woods — and I love the Shuttle," Phillips said. It is evident in his office — his museum — where he has pictures, plaques and models all devoted to his hobby and his work.

He first started learning his hobby 15 years ago, and he admits those early models were pretty rough. But over the years, he has fine-tuned his woodworking skills. This year he completed 13 Space Shuttles, all one-of-a-kind. Each one has a serial number and comes with a certificate of authenticity signed by Phillips that includes the types of wood he used in its manufacture. He has built 75 Space Shuttle models since 1985.

He also makes plaques for co-workers and furniture, such as Adirondack chairs, for family members. His products can be seen on the Internet at: <http://www.geocities.com/scottspace/>

"I keep documentation on each model to ensure I don't build the same model twice," said Phillips, who lives in Harvest, Ala., with his wife Dianne and sons Christian and Tyler. "Each model is unique." Some are signed by the astronauts who flew the mission the Shuttle model is dedicated to.

## Favorite model

His favorite is a model of STS-93 that has been signed by the crew, including the first female shuttle commander, Eileen Collins. "I keep that one on a bookshelf in my living room," he said. His wife was with him when the crewmembers signed the model. He said without her support, he would not be able to pursue his hobby. His family is very important to him. He divides his time so he has ample time for family before heading to his workshop to spend time on his hobby.

Phillips remembers working on models when he was 10 years old — during the Apollo years. "I fell in love with wood and the Shuttle at the same time," he said. Less than 10 years after humans landed on the Moon, Phillips started his career with the space program with Lockheed Martin — then Martin Marietta.

"I have worked on all three versions of the External Tank and all 100 Shuttle launches," said Phillips, who handles shipping and other logistics support for the External Tank. He recently



Photo by Terry Leibold, NASA/Marshall Space Flight Center

Phillips displays some of his models.

received a plaque from Alex McCool, manager of Marshall's Space Shuttle Projects Office commemorating his involvement in the first 100 Shuttle flights. "Only 120 employees at Marshall received a plaque like that one."

He said in his early woodworking days, co-workers approached him to build plaques for other co-workers who were retiring. And he enjoyed doing it. It was fun. Then he reached a turning point where he became more serious about his hobby.

"The turning point came for me when I built a model as a memorial to a co-worker, John Ransburg, who had died of a heart attack on the golf course," said Phillips, who is known by co-workers as The Shuttleman. "We presented the model to his family at a memorial dinner we had at the office. When I looked around the room, his wife, son and grandchildren had tears in their eyes. It was hard for me to maintain my control. I realized at that time that my models meant something to people who were involved in the Shuttle program. They really seemed to appreciate it."

"When most people look at trees, they see bark, leaves and branches," Phillips said. "I see beyond that to the characteristics of each type of wood and see what it will look like when it is blended with other types of wood. All wood goes beautifully together — nature made them that way. I get a real kick out of seeing all the colors come to life when I apply the finishing touches to a model."

Phillips negotiates the price on each model he builds. The money he receives goes back into supplies for future projects.

"This is my hobby," Phillips said. "I don't do it to make money. I want to make art pieces that people will enjoy. I want it to be my legacy to my sons."

*The writer, employed by ASRI, is the Marshall Star editor.*